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THE GAP BETWEEN THE SECONDARY AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

ONE does not need to be recognized as a philosopher in order to observe that what is often boasted as being a continuous scheme of education from the kindergarten to the university has in it a serious crack, not to say an almost perilous break. There is something like a "jumping-off place" between the grammar school and the high school. This, we believe, is recognized and admitted by all school men and women.

The lamentations of the high-school teacher over the lack of preparation of the average grammar-school pupil are almost pitiful to hear. The wail of the grammar-school teacher that both she and her pupils are misunderstood by the specialist "above" is no less mournful. The teacher in the high school and the teacher in the grammar school are calling each other names and saying sarcastic things about each other. Meanwhile the pupil is the sufferer. An arbitrator, with plenary power to settle these disputes must come forward, else the welfare of the pupil will not be so sacredly guarded even as it is now. The probability is that the fault does not lie entirely with either the grammar school or the high school. And it is quite certain that whatever may be the flaw in the continuity of our system, or systems, it is historical; that is, it has developed, and made itself apparent, with the progress of educational thought and experience.

The writer of this paper is honestly endeavoring to state the case as he sees it, and as he knows many wiser than he have looked upon it for a long time. This is a problem that, like all other problems in education and elsewhere, has to be solved. Any person who has a contribution to make toward the solution of a problem in education is derelict in his duty if he fails to submit it to a competent tribunal. If it proves of no value other than to evoke criticism, the effort has not been made in vain.

The high school is taught by specialists. Each teacher there is supposed to know one thing better than she knows anything

else. She brings to her subject in the high school a rich fund of knowledge acquired only after years of severe study. The best high schools in the country, as a rule, admit no teacher to the corps, who, in addition to pursuing a regular college course, has not specialized at least one year in the subject she desires to teach. A university graduate without experience who has made a specialty of a certain subject, will be chosen to fill a vacancy in our high schools in preference to a normal graduate of many years' experience in teaching, even though it can be shown that the latter has been a student of the same subject throughout the entire period of her teaching career.

This policy of choosing instructors has worked incalculable harm to the high schools. There are some exceptions to this statement, but it is the rule, that the specialists in our high schools, while they have given a great amount of time to their subject, have given little or no attention to the study of education itself as a subject. Pedagogy and psychology are not a part of the training of the specialist in the high school. And yet if we understand at all the educational movement of our time as it is interpreted by students of the problem, pedagogy and psychology are two of the absolute essentials that the teacher in high school, grammar school, or university should know. We are fully aware that many college and university graduates regard these names as mere shibboleths of little minds. In fact, a professor in one of the oldest and greatest universities in this country said as much, in an article which was published in a leading educational periodical, less than one year ago.

It is admitted by everybody that a knowledge of a subject is not all that is necessary in order to teach it. Experience is usually considered one test of teaching ability. Yet our high schools choose for instructors year after year men and women whose sole recommendation is that they have won recognition as students in a certain subject. Many of these prove to be excellent teachers. Several do not.

There is nothing in the study *per se* of biology, or history, or mathematics calculated to develop the teaching power. Why should not the specialist be required to take a course in educa-

tion before he is allowed to take up the work of teaching? Is it entirely unessential that a teacher in the high school know something of psychology and its applications to pedagogy? Is a person qualified to teach our young men and women in the high schools who is ignorant of the important problem of adolescence?

The high-school teacher often is so engrossed with her subject that she is not sufficiently interested in the main subject before her, the pupil. Then, again, the specialist is so profoundly impressed with the importance of the subject she is teaching that she oftentimes loses sight of the fact that there are other specialists teaching their subjects in the same institution. As a consequence, the poor pupil is burdened with more work than a strong man can do even after he has become master of the difficult "art of study." Here lies one of the chief criticisms against the high school. The new pupil, when he enters the high school, is simply overwhelmed with the amount of work that he is called upon to do.

It may be said in reply by the high-school teacher, that owing to the elective courses now offered in most of our high schools the pupil does not have to select more work than his strength and time will enable him to do. It remains a fact, however, that if the pupil finishes the course in three and one-half or four years, he must select about so many subjects anyhow. The fault does not lie in the number of subjects that the high-school pupil must take. It lies with the instructors who discourage him at the outset of his career by assigning him more work than he can possibly prepare.

Again, as a rule, the high-school teacher does not regard teaching so important as does the grammar-school teacher. The specialist in the high school assigns a certain lesson and with little or no discussion, aside from what the author gives in the text, she expects the pupil to come to class next day prepared to recite. The pupil who comes from the grammar school becomes discouraged with this kind of treatment and quits. His teacher in the grammar school, when a new subject was taken up, called the attention of the class to its essential features before a lesson was assigned.

One more thing in which the high-school teacher fails is this: she does not become acquainted with her pupils. It is not altogether her fault that this condition exists. The manner in which the work in the high school is carried out from day to day and from hour to hour is in no small degree responsible for this. The pupil sees his instructor during a recitation and occasionally in the halls. But that close contact between pupil and teacher, without which much of our teaching is of little avail, is almost entirely wanting in our large city high schools.

Now, the grammar school has its faults and the grammar-school teacher has hers. There is no doubt that too much teaching is done in the grammar school—too much talking, too much assisting the pupil to do what he can as well do for himself, and better too. The pupil in the last year of the grammar school should be thrown more on his own resources than he has been in the other grades. He should learn the habit of independent study. He should be taught how to do things. Then he should understand that he must do these things without any assistance whatsoever from his teacher. The tendency of the grammar-school teacher is to make everything as easy as possible for the pupil. This is certainly a great mistake. The eighth-grade pupil has more capacity for independent work than the grammar-school teacher accredits to him.

The grammar-school teacher is not often a university graduate and she does not always have the respect that she should have for the accomplishments of the high-school specialist. She is not able to sympathize with the ardor and enthusiasm of the man or woman who has spent the best years of his or her life in working out the details of a single subject. Ripe scholarship is entitled to courteous respect. But it is well known that only those who possess the habits of the student can appreciate the attainments of the scholar. We believe it would be desirable to have grammar-school teachers who were scholars as well as teachers.

The city schools of today employ no teachers for the elementary schools who have not had the equivalent of a normal-school training in addition to being high-school graduates. It

too often occurs that the normal-school graduate thinks herself the equal in scholarship of the college or university graduate. This is a false conception. The normal school cannot furnish, nor does it pretend to furnish, in two years what the university requires four years to accomplish. But it gives to the teacher who wishes to take up the work of teaching in the elementary school what the university does not offer, only as elective—a training school and work in psychology and pedagogy.

It is a pity but it is sometimes true that the highly educated man is a snob. He is very much impressed with the important place that he occupies in the world because he is schooled and every one knows he is. Some such occupy positions in our secondary schools and the harm that they do is not possible to estimate. Education in a true sense should succeed in making its possessor modest, for the educated man is he who realizes how little he knows in comparison with what there is yet unlearned.

Making out of our high schools an intellectual aristocracy will not help to bridge the chasm that already exists between it and the grammar school. The introduction of college methods of teaching into our secondary schools may be just the thing, but the writer of this article and a few other persons as well, do not think so. Altogether too much is expected of our boys and girls when they go into the high school so far as the habit of study goes. The grammar school is blamed for not furnishing what human nature cannot possibly supply. The high-school specialists contend that the pupil who comes to the high school ought to be able to do the work outlined there. The student of psychology knows that no boy or girl ought to be required to do all that our high schools demand and do it in the way that the high school insists it must be done. The psychologist has studied the problem of the child, and until the high-school teacher gives this problem more thought and consideration, the present status of the case will be unchanged.

It may not be a solution of the problem, but we believe it would help to solve it, if grammar-school teachers who are efficient were promoted to the high school. There are college graduates who are glad to get positions in our grammar schools in

order to acquire experience. Is there any reason why such teachers should not be promoted to high-school positions? It would be a good thing if every high-school teacher were required to serve a term of years in the grammar schools before she is admitted to the high school.

If the continuity of our educational system is to be unbroken, in fact as well as in theory, this is one way to preserve it. The teacher who has taught in the grammar school knows a phase of the problem of education that the specialist never can know who enters the high school as instructor in a single subject. And if such a teacher is qualified from the point of view of scholarship to teach in the high school, what better thing can we do toward closing up the gap between the high school and the grammar school than to promote such a teacher?

If the problem that the education of the children of this country presents for solution is ever to be more nearly solved than at present, it will not be by having a superintendent and a few principals who are supposed to do all the thinking about the general problem and an army of instructors totally ignorant that there is any problem at all. Instructors should be employed who know their subject, and its relation to other subjects in the curriculum; who know that there is an elementary-school problem and a secondary-school problem, and that the solution of neither is independent of the other; who, in addition to erudition, possess the insight that enables one to understand and appreciate the difficulties that confront the beginner who sets out to explore the boundless domain of learning.

The National Educational Association which met at Minneapolis in July drafted a "Declaration of Principles." One of the statements made in that declaration is this: "We would plead for unity of effort for the complete education of the child constantly keeping in mind that the present division of the work of instruction into elementary, secondary and higher is for administrative purposes only. The character of the work is not to be influenced by any such division. The growth of the child through education into full manhood or womanhood is to be a continuous process, marred by no imaginary lines of division."

Every one knows that such terms as "elementary" and "secondary" should be for the purposes of administration only ; but we all know that in practice this is not the case. There is just as great a break between the last year of the high school and the Freshman year in college as between the eighth grade and the high school.

The university, itself, is, in no small degree, responsible for the failure of the plan that is supposed to be carried out in the elementary school, and the secondary school. It has dictated to the high schools what their courses of study shall be and the high school in turn has influenced the curricula of the grammar schools. This is all as it should not be.

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